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William S Van Allen 04/16/2002 10:32:38 AM From DB/Inbox: William S Van Allen

Cable Text:

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TELEGRAM

April 15, 2002

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - IMMEDIATE
Action: INR
From: AMEMBASSY LA PAZ (LA PAZ 1411 - IMMEDIATE)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, OIIP, OPRC, KPAO, KMDR, BL
Captions: None
Subject: MEDIA REACTION - Turmoil in Venezuela
Ref: None

1. On April 13 the La Paz centrist daily "La Razon" published an editorial which under the headline "The lessons of Venezuela" states "The coup d'etat in Venezuela is a new and sobering wake-up call regarding the frailty of the democratic institutions in Latin America. Since pragmatism has taken hold of Latin America, it would not be unconceivable that we have entered a time of instability in which the presidents' elections would not be determined at the ballots, but rather by mobilizations supported by regional governments and the United States. What happened in Ecuador, Peru and Argentina is proof of that. Venezuela is showing us the potentials and limitations of the democratic institutions in Latin America in these times."

2. On April 15 the La Paz centrist daily "La Razon" published a sub-editorial entitled "Dangerous uncertainty in Venezuela" that states "The bottom-line issue is that one cannot oust a leader elected by popular vote just because there is conflict and tense international relations. To continue rehearsing scenarios of coup d'etats will lead that country to civil strife, an extremity that in no way can be encouraged, as would seem that it was at some point. While it is important that the different sectors of society learn to respect the rule of law, it is also important that leaders develop their capacity for tolerance, dialogue and efficient handling of public resources. That equilibrium is what will foster the deepening of democracy."

3. Left-leaning La Paz daily "La Prensa" published an editorial on April 15 entitled: "The Venezuelan crisis" that states "Once the institutional order has been re-established in Venezuela, let us hope that what happened there serves as a warning signal for the Chavez regime to adjust its actions to a reality which it ignored, or at least tried to override in an authoritarian manner not in keeping with the democratic system. It would be intolerable if in the present circumstances a witch hunt begins, something that would only deepen the differences."

4. Under the headline "Chavez's mistakes," columnist Humberto Vacaflor wrote in "La Razon" on April 15 that "I think that Chavez stepped on too many and very venerable corns. To begin with, you cannot with impunity decree an agrarian reform in a country where political power is land-based. Then, you cannot try to control the state business of petroleum if you know that the production policies, and above all, exports, are something that nobody in Venezuela can aspire to

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L MILLS
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control, since it is something that is decided far away. And even less, to try to do it with impunity, when the equilibrium between the demand and the supply of raw matter is so delicate. You cannot be a friend of Fidel Castro with impunity if you are so near the world's great political power. And let's not mention Chavez's other friends. The complete 'axis of evil' is contained in his agenda of close friends. You cannot do any of that, unless of course, you have the support of your people."
Rocha

Additional Addressees:
None

cc:
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO

Distribution:

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ACTION INR-00

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STATE FOR INR/R/MR, VOA/L, AND B/TVP
STATE FOR WHA/PDA - BYERS AND SCHINNERER, WHA/AND
EMBASSIES FOR PAO, IO

R.O. 12958: N/A
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End Cable Text

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